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ABSTRACT

Literature on current methods of teaching language in bilingual education is reviewed and a new approach is suggested. It is suggested that a specialized sequence of native language courses should be offered to populations of language minority students with the same vernacular language. The approach proposed integrates bilingual education, English as a Second Language, and native language arts as a foreign language, in transitional programs. The characteristic making this program unique is the offering of the native language as a foreign language through elementary and secondary education. A significant limitation is that in order to be cost effective, such a program must serve a large population of students of the same native language group. This approach, while having been implemented to some extent, has not yet been validated. (MSE)

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A NEW APPROACH TO LANGUAGE ARTS IN BILINGUAL EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

Bilingual Education has been, since its beginning, a very political issue in the educational realm of the United States. The first Bilingual Education Act of 1968 placed this mode of instruction within compensatory education. In 1974 the compensatory status was removed (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1975). At the present time, within the concept of students at risk, bilingual education is beginning to be considered again as an integral part of compensatory education. The benefits of bilingual education in the fulfillment of national needs for educated persons have played a very small role in educational politics.

While in the 1980's we have seen a revival of foreign language education in our schools, we are far from reaching a status different than "the land of the monolingual" as described by Simon (1980). An ACTFL/SCOLT Task Force on Research in Foreign Language Education published research-guided responses to the concerns of foreign language teachers (Altman, 1985). How to place native speakers of a language in that language class and what kind of instruction should be given to them was not addressed as a concern in this research report. The language of native speakers of other languages than English is used as a medium of instruction in bilingual programs, but no emphasis is placed on the teaching of the language as a language arts program. Native speakers are usually placed in foreign language courses of their language without consideration of the amount of language that they have already acquired through home, peer, and neighborhood interaction. This paper will describe a program, already in place in Florida schools, that addresses the specific needs of native speakers of languages other than English. This program, which can help to eliminate the concept of "the land of the monolingual," is a combination of bilingual education and Spanish for Spanish-Speakers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Very little research is reported on the teaching of vernacular to native speakers of a language (ACTFL, 1983). This teaching is considered almost always under the realm of bilingual education with the use of the vernacular as the medium of instruction in content areas. Most of the efforts that have been made in the teaching of Spanish as vernacular have been done with the idea of teaching skills that can be later transferred into English (Tonis, 1983). Even in the case of an individual with an identical competence in two languages, a perfect bilingual, this competence has a level that may differentiate this person from another perfect bilingual who possesses a different level of bilinguality.

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Bilingual education programs cover a wide range of configurations from the "transitional" programs to the "maintenance" programs. A "two-way bilingual education" program is one in which native and nonnative speakers of the language are mixed together with the purpose of fostering bilinguality in the students. Within this range of bilingual programs, maintenance programs strive to increase vernacular skills in students whose native language is other than English. In these maintenance programs almost all subjects are taught using both languages, vernacular and English. The same academic subjects may be taught twice using both languages, or a mixture of the two languages may be used to teach these subjects (Ovando, 1985). Therefore, even in those programs where the native language is maintained, this maintenance is achieved through the use of the language as a medium of instruction, not through the conscious teaching of the language itself.

A four-year longitudinal evaluation demonstrated the effectiveness of a partial immersion program in the education of students from different social classes and ethnic backgrounds (Holobow, 1988). "Immersion" is the counterpart of bilingual education with native speakers of the dominant language receiving instruction, in most subject areas, in the minority language. This kind of program may be an alternative method to provide a native speaker of English instruction in foreign language. However, in lieu of native language instruction as a vernacular language arts program, Hernandez-Chavaz (1984), considering immersion programs, proposes that the "native language should be used as the principal medium of instruction throughout the school years" and that "English be introduced gradually, as in an enrichment program." This kind of program would most probably produce limited-English proficiency students. Also, while much has been written lately on foreign languages in elementary school (FLES) programs, with special emphasis on the immersion programs (Lipton, 1988), the need of native speakers of a language to increase their skills in that language have not been addressed.

A great deal of attention has been placed on the "Foreign Language Proficiency Guidelines" developed by ACTFL. These guidelines use as a yardstick for proficiency the concept of the "educated native speaker" (ACTFL, 1985). Yet, very little importance has been given to how we should educate the multitude of children whose language is other than English in assisting them in their native language skills to become "educated native speakers". Furthermore, a great number of new approaches (Blair, 1982) or methods (Oller, 1983) have been developed for the teaching of languages during the last three decades, leaping back and forth from behavioristic to cognitive approaches, arriving finally at more functional and communicative approaches. However, very little has been done in considering the development of approaches in teaching the vernacular to speakers of languages other than English. Perhaps the foreign and second language profession considers that the teaching of a native language to native speakers of that language is closer to language arts than to second or foreign language education.

Krashen (1981) states that "language acquisition is very similar to the process children use in acquiring first and second languages. It requires meaningful interaction in the target language-natural communication-in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterance but with the messages they are conveying and understanding..... Conscious language learning, on the other hand, is thought to be helped by a great deal of error correction and the presentation of explicit rules" (p. 1-2). Communicative approaches to the teaching of foreign languages, at the present time, assume that the foreign or second language has to be acquired first in order to enhance oral communication. The process of learning about the language is delayed until a certain level or language acquisition is reached.

This is done to prevent grammar rules and error correction interfering with the communicative process. The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis states that "there are two independent ways of developing ability in second languages. 'Acquisition' is a conscious process that results in 'knowing' about language" (Krashen, 1985). The program that will be described below, Spanish for Spanish-Speakers, has its rationale in the concept that native speakers of Spanish have already acquired a great deal of their language outside the school and, therefore, if placed in a regular foreign language class where nonnative speakers are in the process of acquiring the language, these native speakers of Spanish will be far ahead of their classmates and, therefore, wasting much their time. A special program has to be created for these native speakers of Spanish to refine the language already acquired and to make them "learn" more about this language.

The Spanish for Spanish-Speakers (Spanish-S) program developed in Dade County, Florida, is defined as "a full Spanish language arts and culture program for any student that speaks Spanish." The goal of the program is "to enable students to preserve and acquire Spanish language skills, to gain further insight into the cultures of Spanish-speaking people, and, by association, to improve communication skills in English." In the school year 1974-75 almost all the schools in the school district were involved in the program: 136 of the 172 elementary schools, 32 of the 39 junior high schools, and 16 of the 20 senior high schools. Upon request, students who spoke Spanish were diagnosed by school personnel and placed in a Spanish-S class at any of the 12 grade levels. Spanish-S class periods were presented for a minimum of 30 minutes daily or 150 minutes weekly in elementary schools and approximately 45 minutes per day in secondary schools. The enrollment in the program consisted of 32,474 students in elementary schools, 6,048 in junior high and 3,328 in senior high schools for a total of 41,850 students (Mackey, 1977). By the school year 1987-88, the Spanish for Spanish-Speaking program showed its continued growth. Again almost all the schools were involved in the program: 160 of the 178 elementary schools, 38 of the 48 middle/junior high schools, and 21 of the 25 high schools. Students continued to be placed on a voluntary basis after being diagnosed by school personnel.

Class periods were the same for the elementary school level and increased to 50 or 55 minutes at the secondary level. The enrollment in the program was 44,121 students in elementary school, 7,394 in middle/junior high and 10,921 in senior high school for a total of 62,436 students. Enrollment in Dade County continues to be almost the total of the enrollment in the state. In 1987-88 there were 44,198 students enrolled in Spanish for Spanish-Speakers in elementary schools, 7,515 in middle schools, and 11,924 in the high schools for a total of 63,637 students statewide. However, more school districts are starting to implement the program. This increased enrollment and district participation indicate the solidity of the program in Florida. Although it cannot be stated that all the 'Limited English Proficiency' (LEP) students are enrolled in this program, statistical figures indicate that this will occur, especially in those counties where the program and an ESOL program exist. In the school year 1987-88, there were 19,385 students enrolled in the elementary school ESOL programs statewide, 5,238 in the middle school ESOL, and 5,556 in ESOL in the secondary schools. These figures are below the enrollment in Spanish for Spanish-Speakers at the three levels. Therefore, it seems appropriate to assume that many LEP Spanish-speakers are enrolled in both programs.

In July 1983, Chapter 83-350, Laws of Florida, authorized the Department of Education to develop, maintain, and revise curriculum frameworks for the purpose of insuring a degree of instructional consistency within academic disciplines among high schools in Florida. The Legislature created principles for this development, maintenance, and review of curriculum frameworks. These principles provided a definition and parameters for these frameworks. A curriculum framework was defined as a set of broad statewide guidelines that aid educational personnel in producing specific instructional plans for a given subject area or area of study to promote a degree of uniformity in a curriculum offered throughout the State of Florida. The law mandated that the curriculum frameworks were to be based on current educational research and literature, recognized educational concepts, and statutory and regulatory requirements. The frameworks for foreign language courses were based upon language acquisition and language learning theory, and the proficiency scale developed jointly by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) and The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (Valdes, 1986). Both the Spanish as a Foreign Language and the Spanish for Spanish-Speakers courses were included in the development of these curriculum frameworks. The curriculum frameworks for ESOL courses were based on the English language needs of LEP students.

To understand the differences between the curriculum frameworks for Spanish as a Foreign Language and Spanish for Spanish-Speakers, the frameworks for the first two courses in each of the languages will be compared. This comparison will be better understood if the principles of language acquisition and language learning and the ACTFL proficiency guidelines are kept in mind. The purpose of Spanish I is to introduce the students to the target language and its culture and to develop communicative skills and cross-culture understanding. Its content should include, but not be limited to, beginning skills in listening and speaking with special attention to pronunciation.

An introduction to reading and writing should also be included, as well as the fundamentals of grammar and culture. The purpose of Spanish-Speakers I is to provide a review of fundamental grammar and culture for students who speak Spanish as a native language, focusing on oral and written communication free from English interference. The content should include, but not be limited to, the reinforcement of the students' ability to communicate ideas and feelings, both orally and in writing, and the development of comprehension skills through the study of reading selections.

The different cultures of the Spanish-Speaking countries should be studied. It is clear from the beginning of this sequence that main differences in proficiency are assumed as entry levels for the courses. Level II of the sequence for both courses has as its purpose the reinforcement of previously acquired skills and the development of new skills. The content of Spanish II should include but not be limited to, an expansion of the listening and oral skills previously acquired. Reading and writing should receive more emphasis, while oral communication remains the primary objective. This course should include a cultural survey of Spanish-Speaking people. On the other hand, the content of Spanish for Spanish-Speakers should include, but not be limited to, the development of oral communication skills by giving oral information, instructions, directions, explanations, and messages, both composing originally in Spanish and through translations from English to Spanish; the development of written communication skills including practice in describing story characters, real persons, animals, natural phenomena, and summarizing facts and ideas; and the study of culture including the lives and contributions of famous Hispanic people. The differences between the two courses continue throughout the whole sequence, but they are greater in these first courses because of the entry level of the students. The student performance standards for the courses provide more examples of the differences between the two kinds of courses. The ESOL courses cover objectives at the beginning levels which can be considered coming from either foreign language or language arts approaches.

The literature reviewed shows that the needs of groups of students from the same minority language are seldom taken into consideration for the offering of specific foreign language courses to these students. In Florida, the needs of the large Spanish-speaking population are considered by offering a specialized sequence of Spanish for Spanish-Speakers as a foreign language. The entry level of these students, who have acquired the language outside the schools, makes these courses similar to native language arts courses offered elsewhere in the world. This fact distinguishes these courses from the regular foreign language courses, where learning about the language, as in language arts courses, does not start until the upper levels of study. If a student who speaks a foreign language as a native is placed in the beginning foreign language courses of that language, the purpose of education is wasted. On the other hand, if that student is placed in the upper levels, the basic aspects of the language are never going to be covered for that student. Therefore, it seems that whenever a large group of students in a school system speak the same foreign language as their native language, provisions should be made to offer these students a specialized sequence of courses in their native language. The rest of this paper will present a new language arts approach which integrates bilingual education, ESOL, and foreign language for speakers of that language.

A NEW APPROACH

Before describing how bilingual education, ESOL, and native language arts as a foreign language can be combined for a new approach, it is necessary to state the premises under which such a program should function. These premises are as follows:

1. The native language of LEP students is a valuable asset for the educational needs of the nation.

2. All students, not only LEP students, should be given the opportunity to become bilingual in English and another language.

3. The program is feasible and cost effective in areas with a concentration of LEP students from the same language group.

4. Articulation and sequential delivery is assumed.

5. Concepts can be transferred from one language to another.

The idea for the program is simple. LEP students are usually transferred into the regular English program as soon as possible. This will hold true for the new program. LEP students are usually served with ESOL programs. This will also hold true for the new program. The difference will consist in the delivery of a combination of programs. These programs are:

1. Regular foreign language for native speakers of English, delivered in the usual way in grades 7-12.

2. Foreign language in the elementary school (FLES) program, usually implemented on a daily basis.

3. Native language as a foreign language in grades K-12.

4. A new program that combines curricula from regular foreign language and native foreign language arts in grades 7-12.

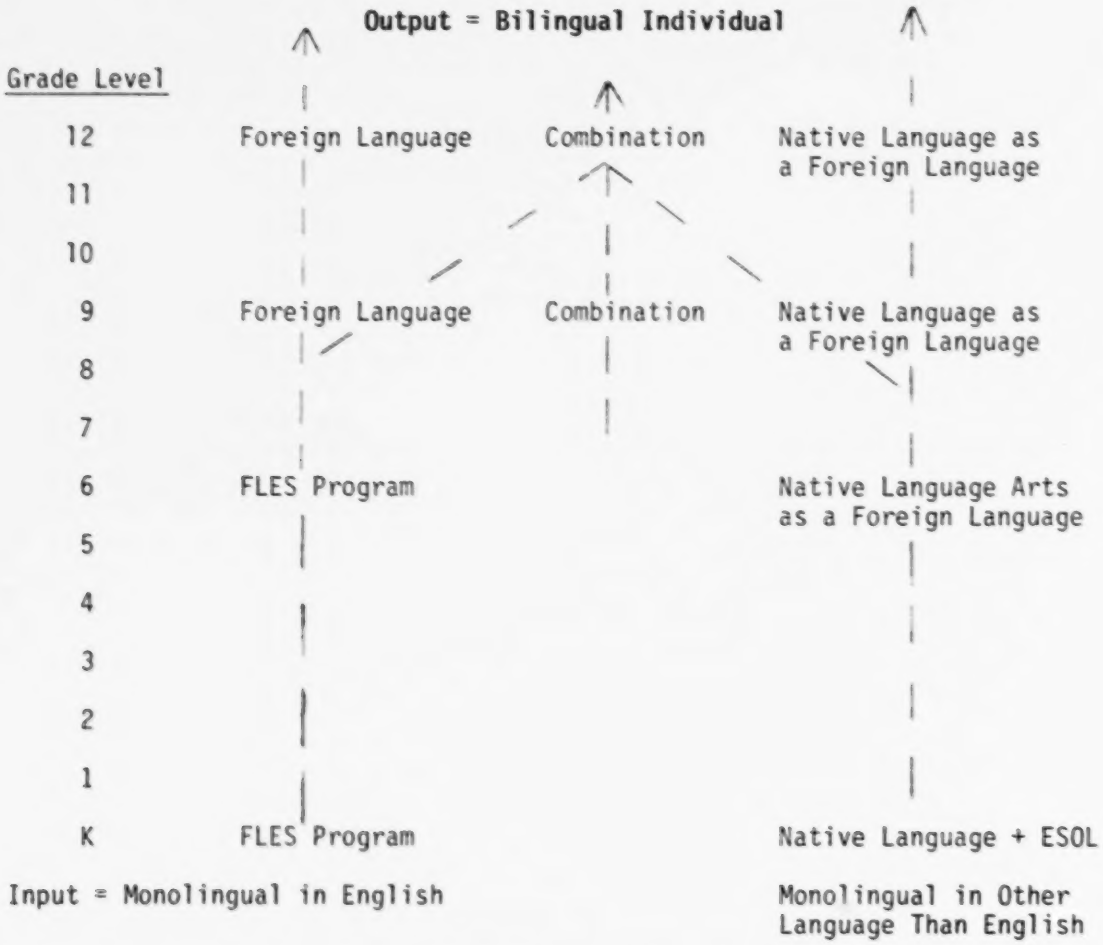

Fig. 1.--Schema for Program to Combine Bilingual Education, ESOL and Native Language as a Foreign Language

Figure 1 shows how the approach can be planned and implemented. The native speakers of English will receive the FLES program starting in kindergarten and continuing with the regular foreign language program until graduation. A student graduating from that program would achieve a certain level of bilingualism where, without a doubt, English would be the dominant language. LEP students would be placed, upon arrival in the elementary grades, in a native language as a foreign language program. Although this program is sequential, it is assumed that students who arrive in later grades would have received instruction in their native languages in their countries of origin. They would continue in this program until graduation when they would exit high school with the same level of bilingualism in both English and the native language. These LEP students would also be placed in a transitional bilingual program that will assist them in acquiring English through ESOL and basic skills through the use of the native language. This program would use an ESOL approach to content areas or any combination of approaches to ESOL that would assist them to transfer to the regular program as soon as possible with the English proficiency neccesary to achieve in the academic areas. In conjunction with this, the current native language arts program offered in both transitional and maintenance bilingual education programs would be substituted by the native language as a foreign language program. Thus, maintenance programs for LEP students would be eliminated because the new approach would also provide a basis throughout the K-12 sequence for transferring concepts from one language to another.

The new foreign language program that combines curricula from regular foreign language and native foreign language would start sequentially in grade 7 and would continue to grade 12. Students enrolled in the regular foreign language program would transfer to this combination sequence at any time when their high level of achievement allows them to do so. Students enrolled in the native foreign language program would also transfer to the combination sequence when, for any reason, they are not achieving a high level in their native language. Students graduating from this combination program would achieve a level of bilingualism that is intermediate between the two other programs described; that is, they would be dominant in English but would achieve a level almost as high in the foreign language. This program would not be a dumping ground for high achievers in the regular foreign language program or low achievers in the native foreign language program. This combined program is the goal of the new approach. It is intended to remain the only program at the secondary level because of the high level of bilingualism it would provide to all the students. However, at the inception of the new approach, three programs have to be implemented until curricular experience allows for a foreign language class at a level which fulfills the needs of both native speakers of English and native speakers of the language.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The new approach described above consists of the delivery of instruction to LEP students within the realm of transitional bilingual education with emphasis on the teaching of English through ESOL classes. What makes it unique is the implementation of language arts through the native language as a foreign language. At the same time, it requires that native speakers of English be offered that language as a foreign language throughout elementary and secondary education. A limitation of the program is that to be cost effective, it must concentrate a large number of LEP students from the same language group. The approach is based on the premises that a) the native languages of LEP students are valuable assets for the educational needs of the nation; b) all students, not only LEP students, should be given the opportunity to become bilingual in English and another language; c) the program should be feasible and cost effective in areas with a large concentration of LEP students from the same language group; d) articulation and sequential delivery is assumed; and e) concepts can be transferred from on language to another.

Different methods of bilingual education have tried to maintain the native language of LEP students. Maintenance bilingual education has strived to offer the school curriculum in two languages. Two-way bilingual education has attempted to provide instruction in the native language to a combination of native speakers and English-speakers in the same classroom. These two modes have been continuously under attack and are surviving in too few places. Furthermore, immersion programs have been offered to native speakers of English to provide instruction in a foreign language. These immersion programs have been effective at the elementary level, but they do not guarantee that the students are going to continue studying the language at the secondary level. The separate approaches described in this paper are being used in some counties in Florida, but without the conscious and specific integration of the two foreign language programs. The use of a combination course at the secondary level that emcompasses both native and non-native speakers of the target language has not yet started.

In conclusion, the new approach, although it has been implemented to some extent, has not been validated as a solution for the linguistic needs of the nation Researchers should attend to the current and future implementation of such an approach to assess its validity. It is hoped that a systematic and comprehensive evaluation of the approach will confirm its effectiveness.

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